



Support H.898: An Act to End the Taking of Horseshoe Crabs for Bait



Overview

Horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*) are a keystone species essential to coastal ecosystems and indispensable to medical applications. Their blue blood ensures the safety of vaccines and medical devices globally. **H.898** aims to ban the taking of horseshoe crabs for bait in Massachusetts, protecting their populations, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring a sustainable supply of blue blood for biomedical laboratories as they transition to synthetic alternatives.

Why This Bill Matters

Protecting an Ancient Species

- Horseshoe crabs, a 450-million-year-old species, face alarming population declines due to overexploitation for bait and biomedical purposes.
 - These crabs are vital to the coastal food web, providing sustenance for migratory birds and supporting marine ecosystems.
 - Restoring their numbers is essential for maintaining biodiversity.
 - Alternative bait includes the invasive green crab, eliminating the need to kill spawning horseshoe crabs for bait.
 - In 2024, two biomedical firms on Cape Cod bled 200,000 horseshoe crabs taken from Massachusetts waters in addition to thousands more imported from other states. These animals, which take 11 years to mature and whose blood saves human lives, are too valuable to use as bait.
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Key Provisions of H.898

- Prohibits the taking of horseshoe crabs for bait in Massachusetts waters.
 - Allows for limited harvesting under permit for educational or scientific purposes.
 - Exempts incidental catches during legal fishing operations.
 - Imposes fines of \$25 per illegally harvested specimen to deter violations.
 - Clarifies that possessing a cast-off exoskeleton is not penalized.
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Support H.898

Passing this bill will protect an iconic species and preserve ecosystem health and promote sustainable alternatives. It ensures that biomedical firms can continue producing limulus amoebocyte lysate (LAL) from horseshoe crab blood during their transition to synthetic LAL.

Contact Your Legislator Today

Urge them to co-sponsor and support **H.898** to help end the take of horseshoe crabs for bait.

Questions?

Contact Mass Horseshoe Crab Collaborative at 774-773-9982.

